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STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS JOIN BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS TO UNVEIL POWERFUL PHOTODOCUMENTARY EXHIBIT *Sacramento Event Launches Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

SACRAMENTO – A powerful photodocumentary exhibit to educate and inspire women throughout California was unveiled today by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The kick-off of the Every Woman Counts exhibit was held at Sacramento's Westfield Downtown Plaza, which co-hosted the event with CDHS and the California Broadcasters Association.

"On behalf of the state of California and Governor Schwarzenegger, I am honored to present this passionate exhibit that captures diverse images, voices and stories of 60 breast cancer survivors," said California Health and Human Services Secretary Kim Belshé. "Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a time to remind all Californians about how prevention and early detection can help win the battle against breast cancer."

Breast cancer is the most common invasive cancer among women, accounting for one out of three cancers diagnosed. On average, every 24 minutes a woman in California is diagnosed with breast cancer. More than 4,000 women statewide will die from the disease this year. Early detection is the key to surviving breast cancer. When found and treated early, the survival rate is 95 percent. The key to early detection is a combination of a yearly clinical breast exam and mammogram for women 40 years of age and older.

Low-income, uninsured and minority women have the lowest rates of annual screening and suffer from higher mortality rates. CDHS' Cancer Detection Programs: Every Woman Counts effort is focused on eliminating these disparities by offering free clinical breast exams and mammograms to these women.

"I urge all women 40 years of age and older to obtain an annual breast exam and mammogram," said State Health Director Sandra Shewry. "Women who do not have insurance that covers the cost of annual breast cancer screening can call our toll-free number to learn about getting a free breast exam and mammogram. Early detection can mean the difference between life and death."

Today's Sacramento event promotes a statewide tour of the exhibit set to begin December 1. The complete schedule will be online by November 1 at www.dhs.ca.gov/cancerdetection. In the meantime, posters of the exhibit will be displayed in kiosks at the Downtown Plaza in Sacramento, Oakridge Mall in San Jose and Solano Mall in Fairfield.

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Stan Statham, president and chief executive officer of the California Broadcasters Association, said, "Our member stations throughout the state have embraced the need to reach women at risk with the program's vital message."

Since 1991, CDHS has provided free breast and cervical cancer services to more than one million low-income and uninsured/underinsured women. Through calls to the program's toll-free number, a qualified woman is referred to a health care provider in her neighborhood. The toll-free line, 1-800-511-2300, is the only one in the nation that can assist callers in six different languages: English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean and Vietnamese. The program's Web site can be accessed at www.dhs.ca.gov/cancerdetection.